SNAP and COVID-19 in the U.S.

The Feeding America 200 food bank network will continue to need additional food and funds from the government to help meet increased need, but the single most important thing we can do to put money into the hands of people who need to purchase food is to increase the SNAP maximum benefit by 15 percent for the duration of the economic downturn.

Feeding America has analyzed the potential impact of the pandemic and we predict up to an additional 17.1 million people could experience food insecurity, many for the first time. This represents a 46 percent increase from the 37 million who were food insecure prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

For every meal provided by our food banks, SNAP provides nine – there is simply no way that our network can make up for the unparalleled strength of SNAP to increase food security and stimulate local economies.

FOOD INSECURITY IN THE UNITED STATES AND COVID-19

In the United States, 54.3 million people will face hunger this year, many for the first time— an increase of 17.1 million people because of the pandemic. This would increase the rate of food insecurity by 46 percent raising the rate of food insecurity in the United States to 16.7 percent.

INCREASE SNAP BENEFITS TO HELP THE UNITED STATES

Every dollar spent in SNAP benefits helps generate between $1.50 and $1.80 in economic activity. Increasing the SNAP maximum benefit by 15 percent would stimulate the US’s economy and ensure people facing hunger have access to the meals they need.

SUPPORT FOOD BANKS

Food banks serving communities across the country are facing challenges in distributing food to individuals and families safely in accordance with state and federal guidelines. In addition to these challenges, food banks have seen a significant increase in demand, with individuals waiting hours at food bank distribution sites. To continue to serve people as this crisis continues, we expect to need additional TEFAP food and administrative funding.
As Congress works on additional legislation to help families weather this crisis, we recommend:

- Increasing SNAP benefits for all recipients by increasing the thrifty food plan by at least 15 percent for as long as the economy is weak to help promote economic stimulus and push against the economic downturn. This will provide critical food resources for families and relieve some of the pressure on our network.
- Increasing the SNAP minimum benefit from $16 to $30 to help individuals impacted by COVID19, particularly seniors, for the duration of the economic downturn.
- Increase TEFAP food and administrative funding.